Founded in 1972, Birmingham Festival Theatre is the city’s oldest theatre producing contemporary and classic fare for adults. It is managed by an all-volunteer, working board of directors. BFT has staged more than 200 productions — involving more than 50 directors, 1000 actors, and 500 crew people — attended by almost 10,000 audience members.
We Gratefully Acknowledge

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And Most Importantly We Appreciate
All the wonderful actors and volunteers who over the years have donated time and talent to create this magical place called BFT!

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Donna Thornton
The Oldest Profession

featuring

Marva Douglas as Mae
Adriana Keathley as Ursula
Sandra Lawler as Lillian
Debbie Smith as Vera
Jeannette Stelzenmuller as Edna
William Harris as The Professor
Patty McDonald as The Heavenly Body

one October, 1980
two a week later
intermission (12 minutes)
three months later
four summer
five months later
six after three more years of Reaganomics

All scenes take place in Verdi Square (sometimes known as Needle Park)
at the intersection of 72nd & Broadway & Amsterdam in New York City

The poem “The Layers” is written and read by former U. S. Poet Laureate
Stanley Kunitz. Mr. Kunitz died in May, 2006, at the age of 100.

Written by Paula Vogel
Directed by Ellise Mayor
Stage Manager Laneshia Pryor
Costumes Kendra Peine
Choreography Melissa Turnage
Producer Carl Sosnin

Set Design Christophe Nicolet
Lighting Design Christophe Nicolet
Sound Design Marc LeMay
Set Construction Christophe Nicolet
Technical Crew Christophe Nicolet

Special thanks to
Southside Baptist Church Rebecca Jennings
Birmingham Weekly Gallery 2306
Bob McKenna Randy Mayor
Oasis Counseling Center Robert Chiles
Poster by Scott Gordon of SmallFrog Studio
Parasols designed and built by Nell and Bill Richardson
**Marva Douglas (Mae),** writer, actor, model, teacher and entrepreneur is delighted to be appearing in the role of Mae in this production of *The Oldest Profession.* Marva returns to the BFT stage after a long absence. Her work includes *Showboat,* 1940s Radio Hour, *A....My Name is Alice,* Ceremonies in Dark Old Men, Happy Ending, The Amen Corner, For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Is Enuf, and Vital Signs along with several industrial films and a TV episode of American Gothic.

**Adriana Keathley (Ursula) was born and raised in Miami, where she received dance training. She danced and acted on Broadway in Camelot and Ballroom. She acted in regional theatre in Ballroom, Pack of Lies, A Perfect Ganesh, and The Desert Song. On Off-Broadway and Off-Off-Broadway she did Uneasy Lies and The House of Bernada Alba. Her television credits include day player on One Life to Live and under five on All My Children and As the World Turns. She acted one season with the Seasoned Performers. Since moving to Birmingham, she has been teaching ballet at the Birmingham Ballet Academy and has performed with them in the Nutcracker. This is her first time on BFT’s stage, and she is thrilled to be here.**

**Sandra Lawler (Lillian) is a speech & drama graduate from the University of Alabama where she performed in theatre productions including Eugene O’Neill’s A Touch Of The Poet with the late Dr. Allen Bales. She later toured the southeast with Dr. Bales & others in Dylan Thomas’ Under Milkwood. Sandra has taught speech & drama classes in Birmingham high schools, UAB, & Birmingham Southern College. This is her second role at BFT. After a very long absence, she is thrilled to be back on stage in The Oldest Profession!**

**Debbie Smith (Vera) is a Pittsburgh native who moved to the Magic City in 1982. She has been in many Birmingham plays, including You Can’t Take it With You at Town and Gown; Inspecting Carol at BFT and several Summerfest and UAB productions. She was a member of the now-defunct-but-lovingly-remembered improv troupe, torrential downplay and is a current member of Huntsville’s improv troupe, face2face. Her two favorite productions are her amazing children, Madeline and Charlie.**

**Jeannette Stelzenmuller (Edna) is a long-time resident of Birmingham and has appeared in scores of productions over the last thirty-something years. Among her personal favorites have been: Eleanor of Aquitane in The Lion in Winter and Lady Bracknell in The Importance of Being Earnest here at BFT and Ethel in On Golden Pond and Olive in The Odd Couple opposite Fannie Flagg for Town and Gown Theater. She is particularly grateful to have been in The Fifth of July with Ellise Mayor as a fellow actor before she experienced her as a director for this production. Working for her is sheer joy.**

**William G. Harris (The Professor), better known as “Bill”, is a product of the Birmingham Public School system, where he began his studies in music. A graduate of Parker High School, and Alabama State University, where he was active in , theater, band and vocal music, he earned his Masters of Music Education at the University Of Montevallo and did further studies and the University Of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Bill taught in the public schools of Alabama for thirty-one years as both a choral and band director. After retiring in 1988, he became a teacher of music and art at the Holy Family Catholic School for 14 years. Bill has been an active church musician, serving as organist and choirmaster at many local churches. At present, he is the director of the Sixth Avenue Baptist Church’s “Men Of Distinction” male Chorus. He has directed music for many shows, including, Dreamgirls, The Wiz, Bubblin’ Brown Sugar, Pearlie, Jesus Christ, Superstar, Guys and Dolls, and Damn Yankees.**
Ellise Mayor (Director) is speechless (for once) and awed by the talent and dedication of this cast and crew. She has worked at BFT since the tender age of 16 - which explains a lot - and appeared most recently as white trash cousin, Camille, in BFT’s production of *Hazard County*. She teaches for Birmingham-Southern Conservatory and Children’s Dance Foundation. She writes and directs for, and is soon to be artistic director of The Seasoned Performers, which produces theatre with and for senior citizens. She will be appearing next as Martha in *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. Thanks to Randy for holding down the fort during this production, and Nick, Phoebe and Naomi for being who they are.

Laneshia Pryor (Stage Manager), of Birmingham, is no stranger to BFT. This past spring she was Assistant Stage Manager for *Voice of Good Hope* and is back as Stage Manager with this fabulous production. Also, Laneshia will be featured in an *All Kids Insurance* commercial and promotional video that will air on television and in doctors’ offices across the country. Other Commercial credits include: Title Max, Title Bucks, Serra Toyota, and Corps of Engineers. Stage credits include: The Office, Monster In The Closet, and Voice of Good Hope (crew). In addition to acting and stage managing, Laneshia has worked promotions for Geico Insurance, Old Navy, and Tyson Food, just to name a few, and has performed voice over work for WATV Radio.

Christophe Nicolet (Set, Lights) worked on *Copenhagen* at BFT last year. And now he is thrilled to have another occasion to shine a light on a great cast of characters. Christophe has studied theatre at UAB while doing scientific research, and has appeared in *Othello*, *Arcadia* and *The Cherry Orchard* in Birmingham.

Melissa Turnage (Choreography) has returned to Birmingham after a 35 year absence. Melissa's dancing/teaching career started in Birmingham and she is very happy to reconnect with the dance community here. Melissa has choreographed over 30 original ballets as well as other choreographic projects. She performed with several dance companies in the South East and has taught ballet and creative movement to children and adults in Birmingham, Atlanta, Macon, and Baltimore, MD. She is currently happily on staff at the Children's Dance Foundation.

Kendra Peine (Costumes) is an Alabama School of Fine Arts alumna currently attending UAB. Although she has spent the past few months working on independent films, she’s back to her first love --- the theatre. Kendra would like to thank everyone involved in the production of *The Oldest Profession*. Special thanks to her family and friends for lending a helping hand, she could never have done it without them.

Marc LeMay (Sound Design) has produced original music and sound design for numerous local productions, most recently *Hazard County* and *The 8: Reindeer Monologues* at BFT. You can also hear his work in the upcoming film *Lounge Act* and in concert with the UAB Music Department, where he is pursuing a degree in Music. Marc performs and teaches guitar around Birmingham.
From the director:

“And it doesn’t matter what pew you sit in, what church you worship in, if you know what I mean…if a smart sexy woman doesn’t make you see the face of God, you have the wrong play. You’ve got to love women.” - Paula Vogel

Storyville was a designated area of New Orleans where prostitution was legalized for 20 years from 1899 to 1917, in an effort to clean up the already prosperous prostitution trade. In most of the houses, working girls flourished, as did the musical forms of jazz and blues. Each house had a resident pianist known as The Professor. Jellyroll Morton was one of the most famous. Although the laws of segregation were as prevalent within the boundaries of Storyville as without, the segregated houses were also profitable. Soon the music born in Storyville began to outdraw the physical delights offered there. By the time Storyville closed in the fall of 1917, the original 2000 ladies had dwindled to 400.

By 1917 it was clear that women were making too much money, and crooked politicians not enough. This prompted national legislation to close this far too successful effort to clean up the Big Easy, and forced the women to continue to work illegally. As then Mayor Behrman said upon the government’s closing of Storyville, “You can make it illegal but you can’t make it unpopular”. New Orleans soon returned to its previous level of corruption.

This play has taught me about the value of pride in your work, the resiliency of women, the healing power of sensuality, the liberation of laughter, and the saving grace of friendship.

As for this aging thing, bring it on! As Holly Golightly said, “I love the really old girls. Wrinkles and bones, white hair and diamonds!” Plus, it beats the hell out of the alternative!

So hold onto your seats and treat yourself to THE OLDEST PROFESSION. Maybe you should come more than once!

Warm regards,

The Metropolitan Arts Center (MAC) announces the fifth annual !BRAVO! Birmingham Arts Festival on Sunday, September 10, from 1:00 to 5:00 PM. Designed as a “sampler” to showcase the quality and diversity of Birmingham’s local arts organizations, the !BRAVO! Arts Festival will feature live performances in the Virginia Samford Theatre, the NEW Martha Moore Sykes Studio, and the newly renovated Caldwell Park.

The event is free to the public.

Virginia Samford Theatre Stage
12:45-1:15 Alabama Symphony Brass Quartet
1:15-1:20 Welcome with Emcees Sheila Smoot & Richard Jacks (Channel 13)
1:20-1:25 Birmingham’s Sugar Babies
1:25-1:40 Magic City Actors Theatre
1:40-1:55 Devyani Bellydancers
2:10-2:15 Birmingham’s Sugar Babies
2:15-2:30 Alabama Ballet
2:30-2:45 Flamenco Dance
2:45-2:55 Opera Birmingham
2:55-3:05 Smoke on the Mountain cast
3:15-3:30 CenterStage
3:30-3:45 Onyx Agency
3:45-4:00 Birmingham Festival Theatre
4:00-4:15 Children’s Dance Foundation
4:15-4:30 Dane Peterson Theatre Series
4:30-4:45 Summerfest Musical Theatre

Martha Moore Sykes Studio Stage
1:15-1:30 Smoke on the Mountain cast
2:30-3:30 Alabama Operaworks Arias
4:00-5:00 Salsa Dance Lessons

Caldwell Park Outdoor Stage
1:15-1:45 Birmingham Children’s Choir
1:45-2:05 Smoke on the Mountain cast
2:10-2:30 Park Players
2:35-2:50 Sanspointe Dance Company
2:55-3:15 Devyani Bellydancers
3:30-5:00 John Scalici Drum Circle

activeculture.info
What's going on where around here
Sep 7 - 24, 2006
The Oldest Profession
by Paula Vogel
Directed by Ellise Mayor

It’s 1980 in New York City and five aging working girls are having to get creative to find ways to continue plying their trade. Against a backdrop of increased competition and shrinking clientele, this colorful set of septuagenarians are determined to keep practicing the world’s oldest profession.

Nov 30 - Dec 16, 2006
The Woman In Black
Adapted by Stephen Mallatratt
Directed by Bill York

An edge-of-your-seat ghost story that has been playing to sold-out houses for over 16 years at London’s Fortune Theatre. This "play within a play" begins on Christmas Eve and uses classic horror tale ingredients -- a foreboding old house with a mysterious owner, a naïve lawyer, foggy moors and menacing marshes -- to transport the audience through a dark and horrifying mystery.

Apr 19 - May 15, 2007
Frozen
by Bryony Lavery
Directed by Steve Ray

Frozen connects the lives of three strangers involved in a child’s disappearance: the mother, the kidnapper and an academic studying serial killers. A gripping study of anger and forgiveness, the show was a hit in London (winning the prestigious Barclay Award for Best New Play of 1998) and New York (nominated for 4 Tonys, including Best Play).

Jul 19 - Aug 4, 2007
Fuddy Meers
by David Lindsay-Abaire
Directed by Janelle Cochrane

Clare has a rare form of amnesia. She wakes every day, her mind a blank slate until her husband arrives with coffee and tells her who she is. Today, while her husband is in the shower, a limping, lisping, half-blind, half-deaf man in a ski mask pops out from under her bed and claims he is her brother and the only one who can save her. Clare’s day subsequently includes her speech-impaired mother, a dim-witted thug with his sock puppet, a lady cop who has been kidnapped by her husband and their perpetually stoned son.

Oct 19 - Nov 5, 2006
Fat Pig
by Neil LaBute
Directed by Gaye Jeffers

Tom is attracted to Helen who is attracted to Tom. Perfect, right??? Think again. This stinger by LaBute asks important questions: Can we eliminate peer pressure from our important life choices? What compromises should we make in a relationship? What is the downside to living in a culture obsessed with beauty? Can love ever be blind? Should it be? No easy answers in this bitingly funny modern romance.

Jan 25 - Feb 10, 2007
Mahalia
by Tom Stolz
Directed by Chalethia Williams

A musical tribute to an American icon considered by many to be the world’s greatest gospel singer. From her humble beginnings as a minister’s daughter in New Orleans, Mahalia Jackson spurned the blues as “songs of despair” and turned instead to the hopeful messages of gospel music.
Sign me up!
I know a good deal when I see one.

BFT’s season tickets are the most flexible in town. Each consists of eight coupons which can be used for admission to any combination of performances -- one to each of the season’s eight shows; two to any four of the season’s shows; eight to any one of the season’s shows; etc. Pairs of BFT season tickets make excellent presents (Christmas, birthday, anniversary). So, one season ticket can be four presents!

Send me ____ Season Ticket Packages at $99 each (a saving of $42 off individual prices) …. $ __________
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